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ABSTRACT

Many problems can be alleviated through building-wide coordination of the schedule for teaching reading. Further, such coordination can balance the load and responsibility between regular classroom teachers and other specialists and can improve the quality of reading instruction for most children. Scheduling can be accomplished as follows: step one (time)--reading instruction must be scheduled first, before P.E., art, music, library visitation, or lunch; step two (levels)--each child's functional reading level must be determined; step three (assignments)--the teaching load and responsibility should be balanced between all language arts personnel; and step four (quality)--the new scheduling arrangement should result in obvious qualitative improvements in reading instruction. (HOD)

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The Reading Schedule:
A Neglected Variable

In most schools, the scheduling of reading instruction is left to the classroom teacher. This seemingly innocuous practice creates some serious problems; First, the classroom teacher is usually the last person to establish a daily schedule. Usually music, art, P.E., speech, library, recess, and lunch schedules are planned first and the classroom teacher must fit his or her schedule to whatever time is left. Ironically, reading--the highest priority subject--gets what's left after the lower priority activities are scheduled. Second, left to chance, there is usually little coordination of schedules (for reading) between the regular classroom teacher and the librarian, resource teacher, remedial reading teacher or grade-level partners. This lack

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of coordination results in a serious imbalance of load and responsibility. Classroom teachers are expected to teach a full class load, often as many as 35 children, even during reading when grouping is required. But other specialists usually teach only a small number of children at any one time. In spite of this, the classroom teacher is still primarily responsible for students' progress in reading. Third, the lack of coordination may also mean that many students will be given instruction at the wrong level. For example, a third grade teacher may instruct three reading groups at level 2-2, 3-1, and 3-2; but many of his or her students may actually be reading at levels considerably above or below this narrow range. In this event, students may have to sit through instruction at their frustration or "boredom" levels. After enduring inappropriate instruction in the classroom, the same students may be called out of class for special reading instruction at inopportune times during the rest of the school day.

These problems can be alleviated through building-wide coordination of the schedule for teaching reading. Such coordination can balance the load and responsibility between regular classroom teachers and other specialists more equitably and also improve the quality of reading instruction for most children. And this is how it can be done.

Step One, Time: Reading instruction must be scheduled first, before P.E., art, music, library visitation, or lunch. It seems reasonable to schedule the top priority instructional program first and then fit other, lesser priority programs in around it. The schedule in our school is like this:

9:00 to 9:45 Second Grade
9:45 to 10:30 Third Grade
10:30 to 10:45 Break (during recess)
10:45 to 1130 Fourth Grade
11:30 to 12:15 Fifth Grade
12:15 to 1:15 Lunch and Preparation
1:15 to 2:15 Sixth Grade

(Because of other conflicting program considerations, the first grade was not included in the overall building schedule.)

This schedule helped us to put all of the language arts resources of the school (space, materials, personnel) at the disposal of the classroom teacher when he or she needed them most. The arrangement made it possible to lighten the regular classroom teacher's load, and still instruct for the full range of actual reading levels, by assigning some children to specialists and by grouping the remaining children between classrooms.

Step Two, Levels: Determining each child's functional reading level is absolutely essential. We gave each child a short form (graded paragraphs only) informal reading inventory. All hands helped including classroom teachers, librarian, resource teacher, Title I paraprofessional, and principal. By using

before-school time, class time, lunch breaks and recess; we finished administering the inventories within the first two weeks of school. The children's scores were then ranked in the following manner;

Figure 1 goes here:

Combined Rank Order List of I.R.I. score 5

This rank-order list was useful for assigning children to teachers, for formulating goals and objectives, for planning further diagnosis, and for assessing growth.

Step Three, Assignments: The teaching load and responsibility should be balanced between all language arts personnel. We assigned children in the mid-range to a regular classroom teacher. Children at the low end of the range were assigned to the remedial reading teacher. Children at the high end of the range were assigned to the resource teacher. The librarian was to teach small groups of children when they were sent to her by the regular classroom teacher. Here is an example of the group assignments for the fourth grade. Notice that the regular teachers have only two groups that are distinctly different in reading levels.

Insert Figure 2 here

Group Assignments for the Fourth Grade

Figure 1

COMBINED RANK ORDER LIST OF I.R.I.SCORES

ALL FOURTH GRADE CHILDREN

Instructional Levels	Children's Names
6	David, Leslie
5	Lonnie, Gary, Sheila, Todd Danny, Lori, Trent, Kevin, Susan, Steve, Kim, Shelly, Tonya, Kelly
4	Susanne, Philip, Lance, Susie, Kelly, John, Brenda, Kelly
3-2	Sheri, Joe, Frankie, Mike, Staci, Richard
3-1	Tracy, Deanne, Robert, Jennifer
2-2	Bobby, Nita, Angela, Ricky, David
2-1	Gary, Danny
1	Tina

Figure 2

GROUP ASSIGNMANTS

Instructional Levels	Number of Children	Teacher
6	2	Mrs. Backen (Resource Teacher)
5-2	7	Mrs. Backen
5-1	7	Mrs. Pieper (Fourth Grade Teacher)
4	8	Mr. Johnson (Fourth Grade Teacher)
3-2	6	Mrs. Pieper
3-1	4	Mr. Johnson
2-2	5	Mrs. Brown (Remedial Reading Teacher)
2-1	2	Mrs. Brown
1	1	Mrs. Brown

This grouping arrangement greatly reduces the number of children the regular classroom teacher has for reading. Thus the teaching load is distributed more evenly. Also, since children receive special help during the reading period, there is no reason to call them away from class during other subjects. In order to balance responsibility as well as load, the child's reading-group teacher, rather than his home-room teacher, is accountable for his or her progress.

Step Four, Quality: The new scheduling arrangement should result in obvious qualitative improvements in reading instruction. In our school, the regular teachers did not regard the new arrangement as just another fringe benefit. Instead, they took advantage of the arrangement to do the types of skill diagnosis that had been impossible. Teachers did superior lesson planning, with clearly defined objectives and a greater variety of teaching strategies than before. They were also able to do more personal reading conferences which resulted in greater rapport with children and more attention to interests, attitudes, and self-concept. Finally, teachers expressed great satisfaction with the arrangement. They considered the scheduling arrangement to be a fairer distribution of load and responsibility. Teachers also expressed greater feelings of job satisfaction because of the improvements the schedule made possible.